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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

On the occasion of this 46th session of the Commission on Social Development, relevant to the priority theme of Full Employment and Decent Work for All, the NGOs endorsing this statement recognize that two of the world's major concerns have a disproportional effect on youth: unemployment and HIV/AIDS:

1. Youth (persons between 15 and 24 years of age) comprise about one-fifth of the world's population, but half of the total unemployed global workforce and recent data from the International Labour Organization indicate that over one-fourth of all youth in sub-Saharan Africa, one-third of all youth in Central and Eastern Europe, and roughly one in seven youths in developed countries are neither in education nor in employment.[1]

2. Among today's youth, nearly 12 million out of 89 million are living with HIV/AIDS. Young women are several times more likely than young men to be infected with HIV. In nearly 20 African countries 5% or more of women ages 15 to 24 are infected.

3. We affirm the governments having taken special note of this in the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS in 2006 and are committing themselves to address these concerns using comprehensive and evidence-based strategies.[2]

4. Yet, as Stephen Lewis, then the Special Advisor to the Secretary General on HIV and AIDS stated at the 16th International World AIDS Conference: Youth have been given a voice but it's still a limited and marginalized voice, reflecting the hostile ambiguity of the adult world. The figures are brutal and stark: fully fifty per cent of new infections are of persons between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four. And yet who can deny the appalling absence of programs for, and engagement of, young people in the fight against the pandemic.

5. With this in mind and based on the grassroots experiences of our members in developing countries throughout the world we recommend linking the needs generated by both youth unemployment and the HIV/AIDS pandemic to assist in realizing decent employment for all.

6. Recommendations:

    1. Include youth in country level policy-making and program-implementation boards related to both employment and HIV/AIDS. The creativity and fresh vision of youth participating on an equal level with others, specifically through NGOs active in this field, can lead to innovative and effective approaches to both of these difficult issues.

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[1] *Youth employment: impact, challenges and opportunities for social development*", note by the Secretariat. E/CN.5/2007/3, 29 January 2007. I. Background, 1.

[2] *Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS*, General Assembly Resolution A/RES/60/262, 15 June 2006.

2. Develop, with the participation of youth and youth-focused NGOs, specific employment programs which link the needs generated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the energy and abilities of youth; e.g. develop a youth corps of workers to provide for the needs for education regarding the prevention of AIDS, the needs for care of orphans, for those who are infected and for the elderly. Enlist the aid of UN technical assistance programs (e.g. that are located in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) to develop effective international partnerships and fund-raising strategies to provide the resources needed to implement such a program.

   The long-term economic benefits to a country which developed a cadre of credentialed youth health care workers could assist in providing health service being lost through the migration of professionals from a developing country and also to providing meaningful and decent employment for youth.
   A program such as that outlined above could also respond to the loss of human capacity being experienced in country after country which has been overwhelmed by all the dimensions of the HIV/AIDS crisis. As Stephen Lewis suggests "the capacity crisis illuminates, more than anything else, what is needed. There are solutions: investment in the public sector and in extensive ongoing training can begin to fill the gap." However, these elements need to be resourced by the donor community but under the guidance of country-level policies and programs in which youth have played a major role.

3. Provide support for two youth employment initiatives which have great potential for involving youth in generating needed employment and enhancing their productive participation in the economic life of their countries: the YES Campaign and Youth Employment Network (YEN).

   The YES Campaign strives to build the individual capacity of youth in order to create sustainable livelihoods and to establish an entrepreneurial culture where young people move toward formal employment. With the support of diverse stakeholders, networks organize and facilitate customized programming that relies on youth to drive the implementation process. Since its launch in 2002, the YES Campaign has shown that young people, if given access to the right resources, can effectively craft their own advancement opportunities.[3]

   YEN (Youth Employment Network of the ILO) views young people as partners in devising solutions to a common problem and

   - seeks to ensure that its policy recommendations support the aspirations of young people rather than impose perceived 'needs' upon them.

[3] http://yesweb.org/thematic%20publications_Kenya%20Summit%202006/state_of_the_yes_campaign.pdf.

- works to ensure representative youth groups play central roles in the development and implementation of National Action Plans on youth employment.[4]

We would further encourage these two initiatives to examine the links between youth employment and HIV/AIDS to increase their impact on the millions of youth affected and infected by the pandemic and to ensure their participation in the economic life of their societies.

We believe that educating and funding youth educators to deliver HIV/AIDS education programs in primary and secondary schools as a part of National Plans to address HIV/AIDS will result in much more effective educational efforts. Our experience has shown that relationships among youth are often more influential in changing behaviour. Additionally, such a program would result in a higher rate of youth employment.

4. As noted earlier, the rate of infection of young women now is significantly higher than that of young men. We also note that with the devastation of the AIDS pandemic, young women have increasingly become more vulnerable to infection as they join migrant streams and have greater need for employment in the formal sector of the economy. Consequently, it is imperative that each of the above recommendations should have a gender dimension to ensure that young women are proportionally represented in efforts to provide solutions to youth unemployment.

Notes

Statement endorsed and supported by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Dominican Leadership Conference, International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and UNANIMA International.

[4] http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/strat/yen/challenge/index.htm.